

COMMITTEES:

APPROPRIATIONS

COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND
TRANSPORTATION

ENVIRONMENT AND
PUBLIC WORKS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 26, 2012

The Honorable John L. Mica
Chairman
House Transportation
& Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nick J. Rahall, II
Ranking Member
House Transportation
& Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Mica and Ranking Member Rahall:

I write to urge you not to include any provision in the surface transportation reauthorization legislation that would allow the operation of larger or heavier tractor-trailer trucks on our nation's highways. While trucks play an important role in our transportation system, they can exact a hefty toll on our communities and on our transportation infrastructure, including roads and bridges.

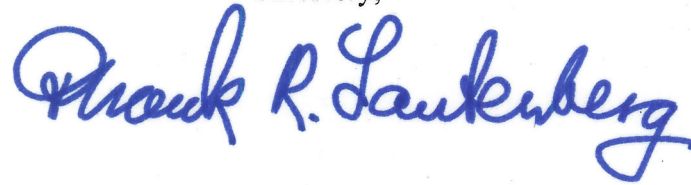
Larger and heavier trucks mean bigger safety risks for highway drivers. Even though overall traffic fatalities declined in 2010, the number of people killed in crashes involving large trucks increased nearly nine percent over the number of fatalities in 2009. While one in 25 registered vehicles on the highway is a large truck, a large truck is involved in about one in every nine fatal crashes, and a fatal truck crash results in the death of the occupants of the other vehicle in approximately 75 percent of cases. The fatal crash rate for large trucks is 2.4 deaths per 100 million vehicle miles traveled—more than 50 percent greater than the rate for all vehicles on the roads.

Larger and heavier trucks also mean more wear and tear on our infrastructure. This point is critical, considering the backlog on highway and bridge maintenance in the current budgetary climate. Nearly 27 percent of our nation's bridges are in need of serious repair, including 36 percent of New Jersey's bridges. The National Surface Transportation Policy and Revenue Study Commission estimated that the cost to meet the country's transportation needs is \$225 billion each year.

Some have argued that truck limits should be determined individually by states. Such a piecemeal approach to interstate transportation would not respect states' rights to keep their transportation systems safe and in a state of good repair. It would also ignore the important federal role in facilitating interstate commerce in a fair and consistent manner. Several states have raised concerns about this approach and their ability to prevent larger and heavier trucks on their already overburdened highways. Further, constituents in many of our states have raised significant opposition. Two April 2011 independent polls found that more than 72 percent of Americans oppose larger and heavier trucks on our highways.

As you finalize your surface transportation reauthorization legislation, I ask you to not include any provision allowing larger and heavier trucks on our highways. Thank you for your consideration of this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank R. Lautenberg". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "F" and a long, sweeping underline.